

***PROPERLY GROUNDED***  
**Daniel 1; Matthew 7:24-27**

**(Read Matthew 7:24-27)**

**Intro:** Let's pray:

*Teach us, Lord, full obedience,*

*Holy reverence, true humility;*

*Test our thoughts and our attitudes*

*In the radiance of Your purity.*

*Cause our faith to rise; cause our eyes to see*

*Your majestic love and authority.*

*Words of pow'r that can never fail—*

*Let their truth prevail over unbelief. Amen.*

Once upon a time our BIC ancestors debated whether or not the Brethren should affix lightning rods to the peaks of their houses and barns. In simple terms, a lightning rod has a wire that conducts the super jolt of electricity from a lightning strike from the roof peak into the ground via a ground rod. The Brethren considered it a lack of faith to have lightning rods. I think it's just being smart and prudent to protect your property by being properly grounded.

When Dale Dohner installed the electric in my kitchen island a number of years ago, he did what any smart and prudent electrician does and made sure that every connection he made was properly grounded so as to prevent the danger of electrical shock or electrical fire.

Being properly grounded can simply mean building upon the rock as the wise man does in the text I just read. Or having a solid base on which to stand. I've heard of farmers who, when painting their barn and finding their tallest ladder too short, have been known to tie another ladder on the top of the first ladder to reach the formerly unreachable sport on their barn peak. Of course no one at ABC would do such a thing like that, would they, Keith Crone?

Yes, it's alleged that women live longer than men for a reason. I have no idea what they're talking about (show slides) . . .

We can laugh at this or shake our heads incredulously, but this is a perfect lead-in to our talk for today. As we talk about Revival: Living the Gospel and Restoring the World this summer, a sure way to make sure we do that is by being properly grounded. To put it in a more negative light, a sure way to undermine revival and restoration is by not being on a firm footing and falling into temptation and outfight sin. This is very harmful to the witness of the church and does irreparable damage that is gleefully pounced upon by those who would disparage the people of God.

My, how the mighty have fallen! Over the past year we have seen many leaders in all fields taken down by the Me-Too movement. Women who have been silent out of fear and threat of harm have spoken out against men who have used their power and position to prey on them. The "who's who" of entertainment, business and politics has been tumbling like dominoes.

Now, no matter what your thoughts are on this, the veracity of the claims of the offended women and girls has been validated in almost all of the cases by the fact that the men have stepped down from their lofty positions with their heads hanging in shame. They know their guilt. They know they abused their power. They know they had stepped from the solid foundation of integrity into the slimy muck of forgetting their responsibility. They got too big for their britches and the collapse was mighty.

I don't know what the profession of faith for these men. Many of them, by all appearances, make no profession at all so they had a strike against them already in that they didn't have the firm foundation of faith in Christ to keep them from collapsing. But the really discouraging thing is that many of these accused molesters were Christ Followers – some of them even pastors of large and influential churches. One of the accused is a man I have followed quite closely and respected immensely. My heart breaks for him, his church, and his alleged victims.

The truth is, if you leave the solid ground, you will sink. This is because . . .

**No matter how strong you are you are susceptible to falling.**

- Because you are only as strong as the foundation upon which you stand. The parable of the wise builder and the foolish builder is probably a favorite story for anyone who went to Sunday School – and one of my favorite songs too.

*The wise man built his house upon a rock  
 The foolish man built his house upon the sand  
 And the rains came tumbling down.  
 The rains came down and the floods came up  
 And the house on the rock stood firm  
 And the house on the sand went crash!  
 So, build your house on the Lord Jesus Christ  
 And the blessings will come down  
 Oh, the blessings come down  
 As your prayers go up  
 So build your house on the Lord.*

- This parable was how Jesus concluded his Sermon on the Mount. He preached a foundational message and sealed it with a rock solid word picture of what he'd been teaching. Peterson paraphrases verse 24 perfectly. Listen, *These words I speak to you are not incidental additions to your life, homeowner improvements to your standard of living. They are foundational words, words to build a life on.* Matthew 7:24a (The Message). Foundational words. If they are not there, if you miss the point, you will miss the target and your house will go splat.
- F. B. Meyer puts it simply, yet powerfully, *To believe about Christ is not enough, you must believe IN him.* Your faith isn't something to be trifled with. It isn't something you forget about between Sundays – you need to live it. As children of the living God, we need to take his Word seriously and build our life on it. In order to stay properly grounded we need to have a faith that informs our lives, rather than the other way around or we could very well find our head hanging in shame. Foundation is everything.
- Going back to what we read earlier in Daniel 1. Once again this was another favorite from my Sunday School days. It was a good way to keep kids in line by citing the example of some Hebrew kids from Biblical history. The truth is, we CAN learn from these Hebrew boys. . . .

#### **Daniel and his friends trusted that their faith would interact with God's faithfulness.**

- They obviously had a firm foundation. They had somehow been properly grounded despite the fact their country had been overrun by the superpower to the east and they had be carried off into captivity. Somehow their faith had remained strong and it continued that way if you read in the chapters following this one. But let's just look at the discipline of these young men.
- They stood for what they had been taught – they'd had "bringins' up". They had the honor of being selected to serve in the court of the king. This served several purposes: The king got the best of the best. He also converted impressionable, yet potentially, influential members of the conquered people over to his cause. He could count on them to serve him faithfully – they were practically family.
- Despite this they stood firm on what they ate and drank. Was it because they were health nuts who read Prevention Magazine? Was it because they believed in temperance and stayed away from alcohol? No on both counts. They had been taught that a godly person did not consume food and/or drink that had been offered to idols. And they stood firm on their convictions.
- This put themselves and the people assigned to work with them in danger. You didn't turn down an opportunity like this nor did you turn up your nose at the fine dining being offered. That was rude and rudeness to the king in Babylon didn't go over well. In fact, it was a fatal mistake. So Daniel and his three friends were taking their life in their hands in their effort to keep from compromising their foundational beliefs. Their stand paid off and you can see from we read that they were vindicated and the diet they chose became the standard. Their stand for the right thing, helped them excel. They were properly grounded and it served the kingdom well.
- So . . .

**What is necessary to be properly grounded?**

- In one word, discipline. Spiritual disciplines or practices that help to live for Jesus, 24/7. There are many disciplines, but let me briefly suggest four that will help you build your house upon that rock.
- Be immersed in scripture. The four Hebrew men from Daniel knew what their scripture taught and were able to make a valid case for the stand they took. The Psalmist wrote, *I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.* Psalm 119:11 and later, *I have kept my feet from every evil path so that I might obey your word.* Psalm 119:101, and again, *You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word.* Psalm 119:114. That is why Peterson could say that Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount were foundational words, because here in the Word of God are the words needed to take the lightning bolts of temptation and conduct them safely into the ground without bringing harm to you. You don’t have to read chapters – just read words. Fill your mind first with his word and you will be better prepared for the day ahead.
- Remember the Sabbath. I’m not advocating a strict observance of the Old Testament concept. What I’m talking about is going back to the word’s very origin which means to STOP! We need to rest! Our society is getting so frenetic that we rarely come up for air. There is always one more thing you can do and that one more thing keeps you away from your time with God and with your loved ones, and, frankly, yourself. Sabbath is a time to reflect and to rest. One person has said that “*Sabbath is all about ignoring yesterday AND tomorrow and being present in the moment.*” How often are we simply present in the moment? Let’s stop and rest.
- We need to fast. In the Bible fasting always had to do with refraining from food and drink for a period of time. The purpose was to deny oneself for God and to concentrate on him. This is still a good practice. But, in addition to it, there are many, many things we can fast from these days and not just for Lent. Fasting is to make deliberate choices to do less, eat less, have less. Many Christ Followers have fallen into the trap of stuff and things and things to do. We have gotten sucked in by Facebook and online this or online that, and we have too little time for what really matters. Fasting helps us to simplify. It helps us as we choose to be present and begin ignoring the distractions. There are many.
- And finally, we need to be motivated by prayer rather than power. I referred earlier to powerful men who have fallen. It brings to mind the familiar adage that *power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.* The person who strives for power will eventually have it turn on him and even consume him. But the person of prayer will be in the right posture for the Spirit to work through them. Pray. Speak to God. Listen to God. Cry to God. Share your joy with God. Implore God. Praise God. What is the common denominator in all of those and more? The focus is on God – not on you. Prayer changes things because it changes you. Be properly grounded. PRAY!

**Conclusion:** Being properly grounded prevents shock and fiery destruction. Being properly grounded means having a firm foundation that won’t wash away in the storms of life. Being properly grounded means practicing disciplines. Being properly grounded will bring revival. Amen.